

ABSTRACT

A method of providing network access across a shared communications medium between competing users includes the steps of allocating to users network access for a future time interval, and then reallocating network access to the users during a succeeding time interval. The level of network access allocated to each user for each time interval is determined in accordance with fairness considerations, contractual provisions regarding network access, forecasted network access that will be utilized, forecasted network access that will be requested, and combinations thereof. In making the user allocations, the users are grouped within classes and the classes first are allocated network access and, then, the users within each class are allocated network access from the respective class allocation. The user allocations determine user allowances of network access representing limits on the amount of network access users can consume in a time interval.